

Message Text

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EXDIS , DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

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TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, UNSC, LE, IS

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION: THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 3714, (B) TEL AVIV 3946, (C) STATE 73647

1. THE INDICATIONS THAT A NEW LEADERSHIP MAY HAVE SEIZED CONTROL OVER THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, OR HAVE NEUTRALIZED HADDAD AND COMPANY, MAKE IT ESSENTIAL THAT WE SORT OUT WHERE MATTERS NOW STAND AND WHERE THEY WILL BE HEADING WITH THE ISRAELIS. YOU SHOULD THEREFORE GET IN TOUCH WITH WEIZMAN, AT THE END OF THE SABBATH IF YOU BELIEVE THE SITUATION WILL WAIT THAT LONG, AND, DRAWING ON OTHER INFORMATION WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED BY THEN, ATTEMPT TO ASCERTAIN THE ISRAELI POSITION AND PUT HIM ON NOTICE

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AGAIN THAT WE EXPECT ISRAEL TO DO EVERYTHING NECESSARY TO ASSURE THE COOPERATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FORCES WITH UNIFIL. MAKE CLEAR OUR POSITION THAT UNIFIL APPEARS DETERMINED TO MOVE AND BEHAVE CAUTIOUSLY BUT THAT ANY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN FORCES AND UNIFIL WILL SERVE NO ONE'S PURPOSES, AND ISRAEL WOULD BE CERTAIN TO BE BLAMED BY MANY QUARTERS, AND NOT SIMPLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, BECAUSE

OF ITS KNOWN COOPERATION WITH THESE FORCES.

2. YOU SHOULD DRAW ON WEIZMAN'S EXCHANGES WITH VIETS (REFTELS), REMINDING HIM THAT HE INTER ALIA HAD TALKED ABOUT HAVING ISRAELI FORCES REMAIN IN SOUTH LEBANON FOR TWO TO THREE MONTHS WHILE TRAINING A FORCE OF AROUND 1500 CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIM SHIAS. HE HAD ENVISAGED IN MARCH INTRODUCING THAT FORCE INTO THE AREA TO POLICE A BUFFER ZONE. ON MARCH 23, HE ADMITTED THAT THE 250-300 CHRISTIANS WHO HAD ENTERED SOUTH LEBANON ON MARCH 22 WERE UNDER HIS PERSONAL OPERATIONAL ORDERS. "HE WAS INSISTENT THAT ALL CHRISTIAN FORCES IN SOUTH LEBANON WILL FOLLOW ISRAELI ORDERS AND NOT THOSE OF BASHIR GEMAYEL."

3. GIVEN THESE STATEMENTS, AND THE WELL DOCUMENTED HISTORY OF ISRAELI-CHRISTIAN COOPERATION, THERE IS NO WAY WE CAN LET THE ISRAELIS OFF THE HOOK ON THIS MATTER. THE PROBLEM THIS POSES FOR THE UNIFIL OPERATION CANNOT BE RESOLVED BY HAVING THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT NEGOTIATE AN ARRANGEMENT WITH HADDAD. THIS MAY HAVE WORKED EVENTUALLY, BUT THESE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE CHANGED THE PICTURE AGAIN.

4. THE ISRAELIS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT PALESTINIAN INFILTRATION INTO UNIFIL'S AREA OF OPERATIONS. IF THERE IS ONE SINGLE WAY TO GUARANTEE THAT INFILTRATION WILL NOW BE
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TRIED ON A MAJOR SCALE, IT IS TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT UNIFIL CANNOT ACT EFFECTIVELY IN THE AREA MOST RECENTLY EVACUATED BY ISRAELI FORCES.

5. SHARE WITH WEIZMAN OUR VIEW THAT ISRAEL HAS EMERGED FROM THE OPERATION BEGUN ON MARCH 15 IN BETTER SHAPE THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED. A FLAT, OUTRIGHT CONDEMNATION OF ISRAEL IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL HAS BEEN AVOIDED SUCCESSFULLY. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN READY TO ACQUIESCE IN PRAGMATIC ARRANGEMENTS COVERING THE GOOD FENCES AND SIMILAR MATTERS OF INTEREST TO ISRAEL, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. UNIFIL, AS EVEN THE ISRAELIS EARLIER ADMITTED, PERFORMED EXTREMELY WELL. THE ADDED SECURITY WHICH THE UNIFIL PRESENCE OFFERS ISRAEL CANNOT BE SHRUGGED

OFF. OVER THE LONG RUN UNIFIL OFFERS THE BEST CHANCE TO STABILIZE AND NEUTRALIZE MUCH OF SOUTHERN LEBANON, AND THIS COULD INCLUDE SOME OF THE AREA ABOVE THE LITANI EVENTUALLY.

6. ASSURE WEIZMAN THAT THE U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE UN, AND WITH THE LEBANESE AND SYRIANS, TAKING

INTO ACCOUNT ISRAEL'S SECURITY INTERESTS. OUR RECORD ON
THIS SCORE HAS BEEN CONSISTENT, AND WE ARE AS INTERESTED
AS ISRAEL IN SEEING TO IT THAT HOSTILE FORCES DO NOT

INFILTRATE INTO UNIFIL'S AREA OF OPERATION. WE WILL DO
OUR BEST, BUT ISRAEL IN TURN MUST DO ITS BEST TO ENSURE
THAT UNIFIL CAN CARRY OUT ITS MANDATE. NEWSOM

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